

## APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

### 2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

**Legal Applicant:** East Carolina School of Education

**Application ID:** 13AC147338

**Program Name:** Operation LINK

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

#### Reviewers' Summary Comments:

(+) The application targets the four counties of Cumberland, Onslow, Wayne and Craven that have a high proportion of veterans living in them. Additionally, the applicant references the high percentage of children receiving free and reduced meals in the schools in these communities.

(+) The applicant provides timely and relevant data (population statistics of military youth, challenges and behavioral issues faced by military youth) that substantiate the need to support and mentor the targeted population of military school-aged children in North Carolina to further develop healthy coping skills to handle challenges related to deployment.

(+) The applicant collaborated with stakeholders from the military community, the Carnegie Mellon Robotics Academy, and Cross-Age Peer Mentoring Program (CAMP) developer Michael Karcher (University of Texas at San Antonio) to identify the community needs and develop strategies to address these needs in the development of the proposal.

(+) The applicant provides extensive and compelling up-to-date data to demonstrate the need for mentoring services for children of veterans experiencing frequent deployments. Constant deployments among military personnel in North Carolina have affected the lives of families and children causing stress-related problems associated with such deployments.

(+) The program will operate in community-based sites throughout the region using a variety of strategies to reach children. Program services will operate in the local Boys & Girls Clubs during the after-school hours and during the daytime in the summer months. The proposed curriculum will progress throughout the year to meet student needs as they grow and develop.

(+) The applicant provides concrete financial examples of how using AmeriCorps members for this mentoring program is more cost effective and far reaching than a traditional after-school program funded through the communities' tax base, as a result of military property not being factored into the overall tax base, reducing the

dollars available to support after-school programs.

- (+) The service model provides orientation, training, and recruitment methods that have proven effective in the past. Confident in their roles, Members serving with recruited volunteers to implement the four Super Saturday service projects. Members gain insight with The Civic Engagement Survey administered to volunteer military enlisted personnel and veterans participating in the four Super Saturday service projects.
- (+) The applicant is requesting funding for 24 half-time AmeriCorps members who, in conjunction with 150 volunteers, will act as peer-group mentors to 1,980 school-age children involved in the program to promote self-esteem, connectedness, and promote positive attitudes toward school while decreasing risk factors associated with depression, violence, substance abuse, academic underachievement, and social skills deficits.
- (+) AmeriCorps members will be trained to identify early warning signs of any high-risk factors in military children, share this information with school counselors, and improve protective factors such as self-esteem, resiliency, social interest, and a positive attitude towards education.
- (+) The applicant clearly documents the research-based tools that will be used for assessment purposes and includes expected outcomes. It is anticipated that the program will serve a minimum of 990 participants that will complete 75% of program sessions; 50% will increase their level of connectedness to friends, school, family, and self.
- (+) The applicant clearly identifies the tested, evaluation instruments they intend to use to show positive outcomes indicating the youth are more connected to friends, school, family, and self, and exhibit fewer negative behaviors.
- (+) The expected impact on self-esteem and school-related connectedness is realistic based on target numbers achieved in past measures according to the Program Director's knowledge and experience with similar projects.
- (+) The applicant proposes to use the evidenced-based Cross-Age Peer Mentoring Program (CAMP) to address issues associated with disconnectedness of children as the result of military deployments of parents which has been shown to be effective in the Karcher and Stotz studies of the CAMP model.
- (-) The applicant does not provide specific numbers as to the extent and severity of need in Cumberland, Onslow, Wayne and Craven counties.